

Privilege—Mr. Beatty

regards the government's advertising campaign clearly meets some of the criteria Your Honour outlined for a question of privilege.

However, it is fair to ask what the government proposes to do with its control of the energy debate once it has seized it. Well, Mr. Hanright gives us the answer to that question under the heading "The Energy Issue Take-out".

Despite some expected difficulty in the early going with regard to the impact of the energy package on the constitutional talks, it should be possible—given the general cast of the strategy thus far—to make substantial gains towards the removal of "energy" from the pantheon of major national issues.

This is regarded as the essence of the strategy, recognizing that it may take several years to achieve such a goal.

"Simply stated", Mr. Hanright continues further on in the statement, "the objective should be to reduce the level of public concern about energy".

There are few issues which are more important to Canadians than the implementation of a sound energy policy. It would be hard to think of any area where Parliament's attention is more urgently required or which has taken more of Parliament's attention in recent years. That the government's actions in the field of energy are highly controversial is not disputed by Mr. Hanright. Indeed, it is that fact which causes him to propose this major advertising campaign, and we have an indication in a further government document that the measures to be disclosed next week will be still more divisive.

In the infamous August 30 report to cabinet marked "For minister's eyes only" which was prepared under the direction of officials in the Privy Council office and the Department of Justice, the authors warned on page 43 that, and I quote:

The political climate in Canada is likely to be poisoned by a major energy conflict throughout the fall of this year and at least the early months of next year.

This is a clear warning that the government expects the controversy over its energy policies to worsen dramatically this fall once its policies are made public. In the words of the document, "The political climate in Canada is likely to be poisoned by a major energy conflict".

Far from being lessened by the disclosure of the government's energy package, the need for constructive parliamentary debate on the government's actions is going to be increased. The purpose of the government's advertising campaign, however, is to "remove 'energy' from the list of high-ranking national concerns". I will bring this again to the attention of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources before he interrupts: "To remove 'energy' from the list of high-ranking national concerns". This is according to the document on which the campaign was based.

I think I have presented sufficient evidence to meet the criteria set out by Your Honour when you ruled last Friday that, and I quote:

When a person or a government attempts to interfere with our deliberations through spending public money, or otherwise, directly or indirectly, or acts in contempt of the House, such action would constitute a prima facie case.

Let the government not claim that no question of privilege exists because the Hanright memorandum was simply the

opinion of a single public servant, or because the advertising campaign currently under way is on a smaller scale than initially proposed by Mr. Hanright. The incontestable fact is that a campaign along the lines suggested by Mr. Hanright is currently under way and, according to a letter I received yesterday from the Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming), who is responsible for government propaganda, three contracts totalling \$5,850,000 have been let, making this the largest advertising campaign of its kind in the history of Canada.

The minister says he disavows Mr. Hanright's memorandum and that it has no validity, but I would then call upon the minister, first of all, to table the strategy documents which outline the purpose of the current advertising campaign because those are not available to Parliament. They are not available to the public. They are not available to Your Honour in order to rule on this question of privilege.

If the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) says that Mr. Hanright's document proposing that this attack on Parliament be made is invalid, then let the minister table the strategy documents which exist for the current campaign. However, even if it were the case, and I do not accept it, that Mr. Hanright's memorandum has no validity to the present advertising campaign, the mere fact that a public servant would propose a massive advertising campaign for the expenditure of, I believe, some \$11 million which was originally proposed, the mere fact of its being proposed would constitute an attack on the privileges of members of Parliament in that what is being proposed in the document is that the role of Parliament be systematically undermined through the use of this device.

● (1520)

The minister may want to deny parentage of the document, but he cannot deny its validity and its relevance to the issue before the House today, and that is whether or not an attempt is being made, or was proposed to have been made, for the government to use the resources available to it and to it alone to undermine the role of members of Parliament, and to prevent members of Parliament from discharging their historic responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, your responsibility, as has been seen by you and by your predecessors, is to defend the rights and privileges of members of Parliament whenever they come under attack, including when that attack is planned and is executed by the government of the day. No majority in Parliament, no matter how large or how acquiescent it may be, can give the government the right or the ability to seek to impede even a single member of Parliament in discharging his responsibility to the people who sent him here, because the Speaker of the House of Commons remains in the chair to defend the House from such abuses.

In eight years as a member of Parliament, Madam Speaker, I have never seen a more clear instance where the government of the day has used the instruments available to it, and to it alone, in order to impede Parliament in its attempt to discharge its responsibility. You alone, Madam Speaker, have the